

Journey

FEBRUARY 1983

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Men's Retreat At
MCC New York
rejoicing
in the
word
made
flesh

by Steve Carson
at Clergy, MCC New York

Our van bearing homosexuals-with-coats-scarves-mittens-and-toothbrushes pulled out from the Church Center on 13th Street and joined the Friday traffic heading up the West Side Highway out of New York City. We crossed the George Washington Bridge and headed up the Palisades Parkway to Cornwall-on-Hudson, a quaint little town that welcomed us with the still beauty of the first snow of winter. We wondered if we were making history, being the largest number of homosexuals ever at one time in this upstate hamlet.

We drove up the hill to The Grail, our home for the next two days, a wonderful three story mansion that in earlier days served as a retreat for monied interests escaping from Manhattan 40 miles to the south. This weekend, it would be home for a retreat of a different sort.

The Grail has been used by MCC New York before, once for a Women's Retreat, and then for a Board and Staff Retreat. This weekend it was home for an Advent Men's Retreat.

The idea for a Men's Retreat grew out of the men's programming developing at MCC New York. This programming has included two pot-luck dinners at the homes of church members, a four part Friday night series this past summer, and an eight week Friday night series that concluded this past November. Monthly mailings keep people informed of upcoming events.

The success of the Men's Program is part of a time of new growth at MCC New York. Since Gay Pride Day, Sunday attendance has averaged well over 100, and active membership continues to grow, with new classes being offered every month. The Midweek Prayer program has a steady attendance of 20 to 30. The music program, highlighted by the MCC NY Choir, attracts many people. Activities are being pursued in bible study, liturgy and social action.

Jim Mitulski, whose leadership has coordinated the men's programming, said "We have been richly blessed by a church life that includes programming for women and men which allows us to share together in worship, prayer and mission. We are working toward a community where men know and care for each other and where women can do the same. We have discovered this to be the healthiest approach for supporting a church that is made up of both women and men."

Registration for the Men's Retreat filled almost immediately. Over 30 attended. There was a mix of new people, veteran members, and people in-between, reflecting the new growth of MCC New York. "Our goals this weekend centered on community building and spiritual renewal," explained Jim Mitulski. "For people new to the church, it offered the opportunity to open up new friendships. For people who have been around, it was a chance to deepen relationships. For all of us, it was a time to be restored and renewed through the grace of God in one another," he said.

After dinner, the program began with “The Word Made Flesh: The Gift of Each Other,” offering a time to get acquainted and to share hopes and expectations for the weekend. Each person was asked to identify something they would like to “get” from the retreat and something they would like to “give.” These were written on paper ornaments and placed on a big paper Christmas tree.

The program continued the next day with "The Word Made Flesh: Our Lives in the Word," a bible study on the prophecy in Isaiah 35 that "the desert shall rejoice and be glad," and an exercise in faith imagination, in which people imagined their own times of exile and hope for freedom.

Another gathering centered on deepening our prayer life, discussing different types of prayer and enriching the ways we pray. The Saturday evening program was called "The Word Made Flesh: The Gift of Sexuality" which opened with a reading of

a children's story entitled *There's a Nightmare in my Closet* and then explored the erotic as a gift in our lives. Opportunity for small group sharing was offered on questions about sexuality. The Sunday morning session was on "The Word Made Flesh: The Gift of the Church." People from many religious backgrounds shared what they received from MCC and what they could give. People shared the understanding of MCC as a "believers' church."

Especially important components of the retreat included the sharing of Morning and Evening Prayer, frequent singing of hymns, and communion on Saturday night. Meals began with the singing of the round “Jubilate Deo” for grace and with the lighting of the Advent Candle. And of course there were games: a trust walk in which partners take turns guiding the other while one is blindfolded, and volleyball, which proved to be particularly eventful in the snow. Free time allowed people to talk with each other, go on walks, or catch up on sleep.

The retreat was an important experience for people as individuals and as community. Everyone made the effort to get to know one another; no one was left isolated or ignored. We had the time, beyond the confines of jobs, subways and schedules, to shake off some of the hecticness of the season and center again on God in our lives. The third Sunday of Advent is traditionally called "Gaudete" Sunday, meaning "Rejoice." It is a way of laying down just for a moment all the preparations of Advent, recognizing that Christmas is in fact near. The lighting of the pink Gaudete candle on the Advent wreath seemed to express the joy of being together.

One of the scripture lessons in our Morning Prayer was Jesus' response to the disciples of John when they asked "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them." (Matthew 11:2-6). It was felt by many that this retreat, and the call of MCC as a church, is to continue to be a place where such healing happens.

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GSS is meeting February 17-22 in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida to prepare the proposal for the 1983 General Conference. Housing will be provided by the Ft. Lauderdale Church.

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JOURNEY

COLLECTIVE EDITOR:

Paula J. Schoenwether

COLLECTIVE MEMBERS: Loni Allen, Teri Anglin, Lucia Chappelle, Phil Gallnitz, Hasani Gough, Kurt Kreisler, Rick O'Dell, Ernesto Borges Torres, Frank Zerilli

COLLECTIVE LIAISON: Troy Perry

COLLECTIVE ARTIST: Jean Gralley

COLLECTIVE WRITERS: R. Adam DeBaugh, Bob Arthur, Jennie Boyd Bull, Larry Uhrig, Nancy Wilson

COLLECTIVE CONTRIBUTORS: Steve Carson, Clarence Crossman, Bruce M. Kassalow, Nancy Radclyffe

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General Conference sneak preview

by Nancy L. Wilson
Clerk, Board of Elders

Every General Conference is special and unique and an integral part of our journey as UFMCC - General Conference XI will be no different!

By now, many of you should have received registration and housing forms for our upcoming General Conference in Toronto, Ontario, July 11-17, 1983.

LOCATION: This is the first UFMCC General Conference outside of the U.S. Toronto, Ontario is certainly one of the most beautiful cities in the world, and has an established, active Gay and Lesbian community. Our Church in Toronto and the whole Gay and Lesbian community there are very thrilled about our Conference. The congregation of Toronto under the leadership of local Conference Coordinator Gary Chapman and Pastor Brent Hawkes, are giving tirelessly of their time and energy to prepare for this event. The congregation will be providing much in the way of hospitality. The Gay and Lesbian community is holding a dance to which we are all invited on Saturday night, July 16. If you've never been to a dance with thousands upon thousands of Gay and Lesbian Christians and their friends from all over the world, don't miss this opportunity!

The Conference business, worship and main housing will be at the University of Toronto. This is the first time we've held a General Conference at a university. This means that inexpensive dormitory housing is available (first come, first served!). It also requires some schedule adjustments

for space utilization, and paying per hourly use of facilities - which means that though it is cheaper for housing, room rental is expensive.

This necessitated a significant increase in the registration fee (to \$65-\$75) in order to pay for Conference. However, our registration fee is still lower than most other conferences of our kind, including Dignity's International Annual Convention. The University of Toronto is located in the heart of Toronto itself, and has a lovely campus.

THEME: Our theme, this year's "Many Gifts, One Spirit," is based on I Corinthians 12:4-6. This is a positive theme, which embraces our diversity in our oneness, the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the gift we are to each other. A hymn by Al Carmines by the same title will be featured.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS: The unanimous opinion of the evaluators of the last General Conference was that the schedule was too crowded and exhausting. People felt that special events that were "optional" were under-attended, that there was not adequate time for business or for sharing with new and old friends, or for just resting and relaxing. Also, a major criticism was that non-delegates felt that there was little meaningful programming for them.

We began dealing with the fact that people came to Conference for a variety of reasons, and that it might be very helpful to have services such as pastoral counselling available to Conference participants. So, General Conference XI will have a less crowded (quality rather than quantity...)

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COVER: Paula Schoenwether

They debate our membership to NCC

SHOULD THE UFMCC BE ADMITTED TO THE NATIONAL COUNCIL?

yes by Jane Cary Peck

Having studied this issue carefully as a member of the United Methodist delegation on the National Council of Churches (NCC) Governing Board, I have concluded that the issue is whether or not the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (UFMCC) meets the requirements for membership as set forth in the NCC's constitution and bylaws, and not the question of the Christian legitimacy of homosexuality.

NCC's Constituent Membership Committee has determined that the UFMCC meets those requirements and is therefore eligible to be considered for membership. Determination of eligibility is based on a communion's acceptance of the standards of trinitarian faith set forth in the NCC constitution and on its being an organized communion of national scope with a membership of at least 20,000 persons and 50 local churches.

The UFMCC clearly seems to meet both these requirements. In its application for membership, the UFMCC declared its agreement with the NCC Statement of purpose and Constitutional Preamble: "... we can affirm that the UFMCC is a communion which responds to the Gospel revealed in the Holy Scriptures; we confess Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, as Savior and Lord. We rely on the transforming

power of the Holy Spirit . . . We are a Bible-believing Christian church which is empowered by the Holy Spirit, and which calls upon the name of Jesus, as our Savior, and upon the God who created us all." The communion has in its membership 176 congregations and about 23,000 members in the U.S. and eight other countries.

The liturgy, worship, polity and doctrine of the UFMCC fall within the Christian mainstream: its bylaws state, "Our faith is based upon the principles outlined in the historic creeds: Apostles and Nicene." Its letter of application states that "the Gospel we preach . . . is the traditional Christian Gospel of salvation, social action and community."

The UFMCC emphasizes Christian social action, especially through ministries to groups of persons who are ignored or excluded in society: homosexuals, prisoners, handicapped, racial and ethnic minorities, aged, institutionalized, alcoholics, terminally ill persons, the poor and hungry. It has participated in numerous inter-religious and ecumenical organizations.

UFMCC was founded in 1968 by Troy Perry to "meet the need for ministry to a largely forgotten, ignored and despised minority, homosexuals." It was established as "a church whose doors would be open to all of God's children without distinction or discrimination." Nowhere in its bylaws is there any reference to homosexuality. Membership is open to all baptized Christians through letter of transfer or affirmation of faith. Leaders of the fellowship estimate that about 80 percent of its membership are lesbians and gay men and about 20 percent are heterosexuals.

The UFMCC recognizes that opposition to its membership in NCC stems from its ministries to homosexuals and its affirmations of God's love for all of creation, including homosexuals, and of homosexuality as a gift from God in the same way that heterosexuality is a gift from God. Basing its view on biblical scholar-

ship, UFMCC maintains "that God does not condemn homosexuality per se anywhere in Holy Scriptures . . . and that the traditional interpretations of Scriptures to condemn homosexuality are as incorrect and invalid as the old interpretations of Scripture which permitted the holding of slaves and the subjugation of Black people."

In the face of such opposition, however, the MCC Governing Board has no basis in its governance documents for judgment either of its member communions or their chosen delegates to the governing board except that: 1) the communion meets the membership requirements and 2) the delegate to the governing board has been duly chosen by the communion.

A few years ago, the board faced its constitutional inability to determine the membership of its communions' delegations or to pass judgment on any individual member in the case of Archbishop Valerian Trifa, accused of war crimes. It would not be constitutional or equitable for only the UFMCC to be excluded or judged on its theological beliefs as a communion or the ethical practices of some of its members.

What would be the effect of its admission on the NCC? The member communions have joined the NCC to live together toward unity and in cooperative Christian work. The United Methodist Church participates in ecumenical agencies because it recognizes in them "a providential aid to unity, and it welcomes [their] provisions for appropriate occasions and processes whereby separated churches can emerge from their self-containments and confront each other in an atmosphere of mutual trust, mutual repentance and reform" (UM policy statement on the cause of Christian unity, 1968). The common life of the council is marked by pluralism; the communions live together with their differences toward greater unity and faithfulness.

Jane Cary Peck is assistant professor of religion and society at Andover Newton Theological School in Newton Center, Mass.

Some fear a breach in the council's unity should the UFMCC be admitted. In my judgment, membership of the UFMCC in the NCC would contribute to the unity of the church. It is true that the denomination's founding in 1968 constituted a further splintering of the Church of Christ, but its rise was occasioned by injustice and exclusion. Full acceptance of gay Christians into the ongoing life of Christian

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congregations is still largely absent, therefore, gay movement into congregations organized by themselves and principally for gay people will undoubtedly continue, observes James Nelson, a UCC ethicist. "[Sexuality] has been used as the organizing principle by which [gay people] have been excluded from full participation" (Embodiment, Augsburg Press, 1978, p. 206).

The congregations and membership of the UFMCC come from somewhere, says Betty Fairchild, coordinator of Parents of Gays, Washington, D.C. "They come from all our churches—yours and mine. And yet these men and women do not seek out gay churches simply because they want to worship with other gays. They have, in fact, found themselves driven away—openly or subtly—from their own faiths, or from their own particular churches" ("The Church's Ministry to Gay People and Their Families," presentation to the NCC Commission on Women in Ministry, February, 1976).

There is precedent for the formation of new denominations out of experienced exclusion. "Black folks denied access to the Table of Jesus Christ in the White folks' church went out and formed their own denominations. Undoubtedly, they took Jesus with them, as he always feels

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no by William P. Wilson

William P. Wilson is chief of the Division of Biological Psychiatry at Duke University Medical Center in Durham, N.C.

Ruth Tiffany Barnhouse has declared that "homosexuality is not a normal lifestyle . . . it is a failure in human adaptation. This may range from forms which by any standards would be considered abnormal and perverse, all the way up to forms which constitute an isolated pocket of immaturity. However, at best, it is an immaturity and immaturity is morally significant." She has further commented that homosexual practice does not lead to God's goals for human sexuality and, therefore, does not fulfill God's sacramental purpose.¹ Homosexuality is sin and is condemned by God.² Humans are called to turn away from sin by God!

But turning away from sin is not very popular these days. Instead, we find that scientific humanism has convinced the traditional guardians of societies' mores that values are relative and that the views

held by the church and government in the past concerning the absoluteness of God's values are archaic and erroneous. Scientific humanism has therefore attempted to negate the concept of good and evil and deny the moral significance of human behavior. As scientific humanism is at present the prevailing philosophy in our society, it is only logical that we should be subjected to increasing demands for the removal of sanctions against behavior that in the past was considered unacceptable.

The removal of sanctions requires acceptance of the behavior as normal. When the behavior is normalized, then those who indulge in such behavior must be accepted at all levels of society and allowed to become full members of society and its institutions. Neither mainline Protestant and Catholic churches nor the government has accepted homosexuality as a normal lifestyle. The only institution to have done so is the American Psychiatric Association, who has removed homosexuality from its classification of mental disease. They did this even though 60 percent of its members saw it as a pathological variation immediately before they took this action.³

It is, then, in this philosophical and moral climate that the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (UFMCC) is requesting membership in the National Council of Churches (NCC). I argue that they should not be admitted.

Apologists for the homosexual lifestyle take a variety of tacks when they argue that homosexuals are normal persons and should be accepted. Their most direct method is to try to reinterpret Scripture. Bartlett⁴ is one who admits that the Scriptures condemn homosexual practices. Then, he tries to convince his readers that the stories of Sodom (Genesis 19:1-11) and Gibeah (Judges 19:22ff) really don't have anything to do with homosexuality but decry the lack of hospitality of the people of those towns. He also argues that the levitical laws regarding homosexuality are not binding on Christians. This technique of argumentation, called *argumentum ad verecundiam*, puts the authority of the interpreter above the authority of the Bible.

Both Jews and Christians argue to the contrary. In a review of Jewish writings, Schindler⁵ observed that both the Torah and the Halacha prohibit homosexuality even though the latter views it as a disease and deserving of treatment. Indeed, he notes Jewish mental health practitioners are obligated to treat it since a change to normative behavior is a value of the highest

order in Jewish thought. Lindsell⁶ and Bockmuhl,⁷ writing from the Christian point of view, observe that both the Old and New Testament Scriptures condemn homosexuality. Lindsell emphasizes, however, that in the New Covenant, homosexuality is specifically condemned along with adultery, drunkenness, idolatry and covetousness. The New Testament takes the point of view that homosexuality is a disease and is as amenable to a spiritual cure (1 Cor. 6:11) as are other problems of the "flesh."

The normative homosexual lifestyle is not compatible with God's order. God created man and woman in disjunction, and it was God's intention that they should leave their mothers and fathers and become one (Genesis 2:24). They were to be faithful to one another and to be fruitful and multiply. A man was not created for a man or a woman for a woman. There is no fruit from a homosexual relationship, and the only multiplication that can take place from their efforts will have to result from the seduction of youths.

When this argument fails, homosexual apologists sometimes turn to the *argumentum ad hominem*. Using this technique, they systematically abuse those who condemn homosexual behavior. They call them bigoted and accuse them of a lack of human compassion comparable to that shown by racists. To reinforce their accusations, they try to show what a loving and kind person the homosexual is. They note that he or she doesn't harm anyone and plead that all they want is to have a lover and be left alone.

What they do not say is that the normative lifestyle of a homosexual male is filled with turmoil. One-third of his kind will have a sexual encounter with a youth under 15 years of age.⁸ Also, nothing will be said about some of his practices, which are disgusting and perverse. Lesbians are somewhat more restrained and discreet but their lifestyle also gives rise to conflict and aberrant behavior.

Sometimes the *argumentum ad ignorantium* is used. If the audience is not too sophisticated, defenders argue that homosexuals are born "that way" and nothing can change them. They also claim that homosexuals are happy with their lifestyle. Since so few of them change, their problem has to have its origin in a constitutional defect. To document their point of view, they cite the studies done on pseudohermaphrodites, who assume their assigned gender irrespective of their genetic make-up.⁹

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more at home with the rejected than among the arrogant . . . The James Varick of the gay church movement would have to be the Rev. Troy Perry who started the UFMCC." (James R. McGraw, "The Scandal of Peculiarity," Christianity and Crisis, April 16, 1973, p. 67).

The formation of churches of the excluded actually is a manifestation of the inclusiveness of the gospel, so powerful that it draws those on the outside of the church or repressed within the church to form new churches. But this is further brokenness of the Body of Christ. It may be lifted up before the prayerful awareness of the ecumenical body and partly healed by the presence of the UFMCC in the membership of the NCC, as by the membership of the Black denominations.

The debate on the admission of the UFMCC reveals how divided Christians are on the issue of homosexuality. "Indeed," NCC's Faith and Order Commission reports, "this division has already undone some of the ecumenical advances of recent decades and is disturbing life within denominations and congregations" . . . These differences dare not be ignored."

In the issue of homosexuality, the church is confronted with contradictory data from several disciplines: different interpretations and exegeses of Scripture, inconclusive scientific data about causation of sexual orientation and possibility or desirability of re-orientation, the meaning and purpose of human sexuality, human experience of homosexuality, and gay Christians' experience of their faith. Further, homosexuality should be addressed within the context of sexuality in general, but the church is often alienated from sexuality.

Despite our incarnational faith in "embodied love" and our Hebrew heritage of the goodness of God's creation, including sexuality, the church has developed both a dualism and a hierarchy of spirituality and sexuality. In the case of homosexuality, this dis-ease and even fear of sexuality is exacerbated. Here sexuality is undeniable; its pleasure is not bound within the legitimization of matrimony or the duty of procreation; it is free and for the purpose of companionship.

Dis-ease with sexuality in the church either denies the existence of gay people or becomes homophobic. Homosexuality is considered solely in genital terms, and gay persons are categorized and rejected as

solely genital sexual beings. The church needs to develop theology, ethics and education regarding sexuality as relational and the ground of our human capacity to love.

This struggle surely should occur within, rather than outside of, the Christian family. Through such dialogue, grounded in openness to God's grace and the possibility for God's ongoing revelation and relying on the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, we may strengthen our unity and deepen our understandings of God's way.

What they do not say is that biologically there is no evidence that physically normal homosexuals are different from normal males or females. Psychologically, they are generally healthy. Their only defect is in their sexual object choice. They are immature individuals. As immaturity is a failure of psychic development, they are diseased. Therapy, conducted with an understanding of the dynamics of the disease, should and does result in maturation and the ability to perform as mature heterosexual persons.¹⁰

The admission of UFMCC into the NCC has to be a theological decision. If those who are to make the decision believe in the authority of the Scriptures, then there is no way that this body can be admitted to membership since the Scriptures condemn homosexual behavior and insist that Christians are to "drive out the wicked person(s) from among us" (1 Cor. 5:11-13). No biological, psychological or sociological arguments are relevant except as they document the sinfulness of homosexual behavior.

Condemnation of homosexuality came from God, who has spoken God's word against it and has never stuttered in God's speech. If we do not listen to God, then we are responsible for the consequences of our behavior.

NOTES

1. R.T. Barnhouse, "Homosexuality," *Anglican Theological Review* (Supplementary Series, Number 6:107-134, June 1976).
2. J.H. Greenlee, "The New Testament and Homosexuality" in *What You Should Know About Homosexuality*, C.W. Keysor, ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), pp. 81-114.
3. R. Schindler, "Homosexuality, the

Halacha, and the Helping Professions," *Journal of Religion and Health* (18: 132-137, 1979).

4. D.L. Bartlett, "A Biblical Perspective on Homosexuality," *Foundations* (20: 133-147, 1977).
5. Schindler.
6. H. Lindsell, "Homosexuals and the Church," *Christianity Today* (17:8-12, September 1973).
7. K. Bockmuhl, "Homosexuality in Biblical Perspective," *Christianity Today* (17:12-18, February 1973).
8. W.H. McKain, Jr., "Ministry and Homosexuality" in *What You Should Know About Homosexuality*, pp. 183-225.
9. W.P. Wilson, "Biology, Psychology, and Homosexuality" in *What You Should Know About Homosexuality*, pp. 147-167.
10. C.W. Socarides, *Homosexuality* (New York: Jason Aronson, 1978), p. 6.

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What's good for the NCC?

by Jean Caffey Lyles

It is difficult to find anyone involved in the workings of the National Council of Churches who believes that the council will accept into its membership the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. In the careful words of the council's own quarterly publication, the *NCC Chronicles*, it is "an event that has been called unlikely."

The council is currently considering the issues raised by the application of the 109,000-member* denomination, most of whose members are homosexuals. The UFMCC affirms sexual relations between persons of the same sex as one of God's good gifts, and contends that there is no incompatibility between a homosexual lifestyle and the Christian faith. Within many of the member churches of the National Council, the moral status of homosexual acts has recently been a subject of sharp debate, but virtually all those churches, at least in their official statements, continue to affirm sexual

*Actual membership figure for UFMCC is 27,000.

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activity as appropriate only within marriage and only between a man and woman. Even among Governing Board members who respect the convictions of the UFMCC's adherents, however, there is an uneasy awareness that news accounts headlined "NCC Accepts Gay Church" could create havoc in some denominations, sparking grass-roots revolts to pull out of the council, or at least to cut back on financial support.

Thus, within the 260-member Governing Board, most minds are already made up, and few votes will be changed by the process of study and discussion. The process may be valuable for its own sake, however, for it will help determine how the council explains and interprets its *No* to its own constituencies, to the UFMCC and to a wider public.

The UFMCC was founded in 1968 in Los Angeles by Troy Perry, a Pentecostal minister. It has seen its ministry as "a particular but not exclusive outreach to the gay community," and its clergy and lay members typically are persons who had come to feel unwelcome in their previous churches. Theologically, the UFMCC has tended toward conservatism. Its polity has both congregational and connectional elements. It started as an urban church (it has, for example, 14 congregations in Los Angeles and eight in San Francisco), but among its 150 congregations are now churches in smaller towns such as Davenport, Iowa, Quincy, Illinois; and Texarkana, Texas. UFMCC officials say that an estimated 20 per cent of the membership is heterosexual.

The UFMCC applied for membership in the National Council of Churches in 1981. As Elder Nancy Wilson, the ecumenical officer, explains her church's motives for applying: "The council has incredible resources for joint ministry, and we want to be a part of that." Another objective, Wilson adds, was to engage the council in a process of dialogue about the UFMCC and the issues it raises for the council. Already a number of local and regional councils of churches have acted on a UFMCC application for membership — some accepting it, others rejecting it. The Los Angeles-based Southern California Ecumenical Council arrived at a compromise, saying *No* on membership but granting observer status. The UFMCC's bid to join the National Council went first to the Constituent Membership Committee. Under the leadership of United Presbyterian Oscar McCloud, the committee found the

group to meet all formal criteria for membership.

According to National Council procedures, membership applications are handled by the Governing Board in a two-stage process. The board first votes on eligibility for membership (a two-thirds majority is required); then, once *eligibility* is established, at a subsequent meeting two votes are taken on *acceptance into membership*. On one ballot, each of the 260 board members gets a vote; on the other, each of the 32 member communions has a single vote, on both there must be a two-thirds majority.

Last spring in Nashville, when the eligibility vote was scheduled, the board, on a motion by Disciples ecumenist Paul Crow, postponed action for a year and referred the matter to the Commission on Faith and Order to study the "ecclesiological issues" raised by the application. (Most of those who favored admission of the UFMCC voted against the referral.)

That study is proceeding, and chairperson William Rusch, a Lutheran ecumenical officer, gave a brief update on the group's progress at the Governing Board's recent fall meeting in New York City. But behind the scenes and out in the corridors there were rumblings of discontent: the Faith and Order study was defining the issues too narrowly; broader representation was essential in the study process; more time was needed for dialogue within and among member communions. By the end of the Governing Board meeting, those rumblings had resulted in a decision to expand the study process and to delay once again a vote on the UFMCC's eligibility.

Instead of voting next May, when the board meets in San Francisco (some council leaders were nervous about that setting: the city's gay and lesbian population is large, vocal and politically well organized), that meeting will be partially given over to extensive discussion of issues related to the UFMCC application. Representatives of the UFMCC will be included as resource persons. The vote on eligibility will be delayed to November 1983; at the latest, the issue will be finally settled by November 1984.

Meanwhile, Faith and Order has 21 theologians named by their respective communions working on position papers; a dialogue between theologians of the NCC and of the UFMCC is scheduled for December. Faith and Order will also be studying a set of documents submitted by each member church relating to ecclesiology, church actions on homosexuality,

positions on ecumenical involvement and other matters thought to be related to the issues at hand.

According to one Faith and Order official, there is consensus within that group that "this is not a justice issue," and that Faith and Order has not been asked "to discuss justice for homosexuals." (Some board members would disagree.) Churches in the council, the official said, already affirm civil rights for homosexuals, and all engage in "appropriate pastoral ministries to homosexuals, though some confess that they are not doing it very well." But the question, as Faith and Order frames it, seems to be whether the UFMCC is indeed a church. Is it a single-issue group with too narrow a base of existence to be regarded as a church? Are its teachings on sexuality heretical?

Between the advocates who see membership for the UFMCC as a "question of simple justice" and the opponents who are unable to accept a church made up of homosexuals as being a genuine Christian communion, there is a larger group who view the question in terms of the impact a Yes or No decision would have on the council or on a member denomination. Undoubtedly, if the UFMCC were voted in, an uproar would ensue. Orthodox bodies might withdraw from membership, along with the Reformed Church in America and the American Baptist Churches. Financial support would decline, and denominational officials would be kept busy answering angry phone calls and letters from pastors and church members. In one worst-case scenario, the outraged reaction could virtually destroy the council.

There would also be negative reactions if the UFMCC is rejected, but they would be far less widespread. No denominations would pull out. There would, however, be sharp words from critics on the left about the NCC's failure of nerve, charges that the council was selling its soul for the sake of institutional survival, criticism of the council's refusal to risk itself in ecumenical openness to a marginalized group of Christians. The council would find its credibility weakened with some publics, especially with the many homosexual members of NCC denominations.

Leaders of the council may wish the problem would go away, but the UFMCC is unlikely to express its love for the ecumenical movement by withdrawing its application and getting the National Council off the hook. Councils of churches at all levels often maintain whatever unity they have by avoiding the issues that divide

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RACA

by Bob Arthur
Collective Writer

In recent days I have had some inquiries as to my opinion of an article which recently appeared in THE VOICE by Paul. D. Hardman, entitled *Don't Call Me Raca!*

With this article, Mr. Hardman has certainly opened an interesting avenue of study. His discussion centers on the English translation of Matthew 5:22, "... whoever shall say to a brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council ..." (KJV). (Keeping male terminology. For the reason, read on.) Although some recent translations have translated the word Raca with a word to the effect of "foolish," Hardman feels that there is doubt as to the validity of such translations. After considerable study I find that I agree with the drift of his objections.

We all know that Jesus spoke Aramaic during his life on earth. Aramaic was the popular language of the Hebrew people of that time. Hebrew and Aramaic are very close to each other linguistically, and much of the vocabulary is the same. Most commentators have traditionally thought that the word Raca was from the Aramaic word reyqa' or rehqah which means empty one. The Greek of Matthew does not translate the Aramaic word in Greek, but rather transliterates it into Greek letters: raka.

Now if the commentators are correct in their surmise that the word is from reyqa' or reyqah in Aramaic, that is a derivative from the verb riyq which means to be empty, thus making the modern translations of "empty-headed" or "foolish" appropriate. However, since the Greek transliterates the word raka, not reka (the closest the Greek could come to the Aramaic reyqa' or reyqah), I suspect it actually is a transliteration of the Aramaic rakkah. Rakkah comes from the Aramaic verb rekak, which is the same as the Hebrew verb rakak, which means to be tender, weak or soft.

WHO SAYS
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NOTHING ABOUT
HOMOSEXUALITY

?

That in itself does not have any special significance. We have three examples in the Old Testament where this adjective is applied to adults, twice in its masculine form rak, and once in its feminine form rakkah: II Samuel 3:39, where David complains of being weak (rak) even though he is king; Deuteronomy 28:54, where we read that under God's affliction even the tenderest (rak) of men will become evil toward his own family; and Deuteronomy 28:56, where we read that under the same circumstances the tenderest (rakkah) of women will be evil toward her own family.

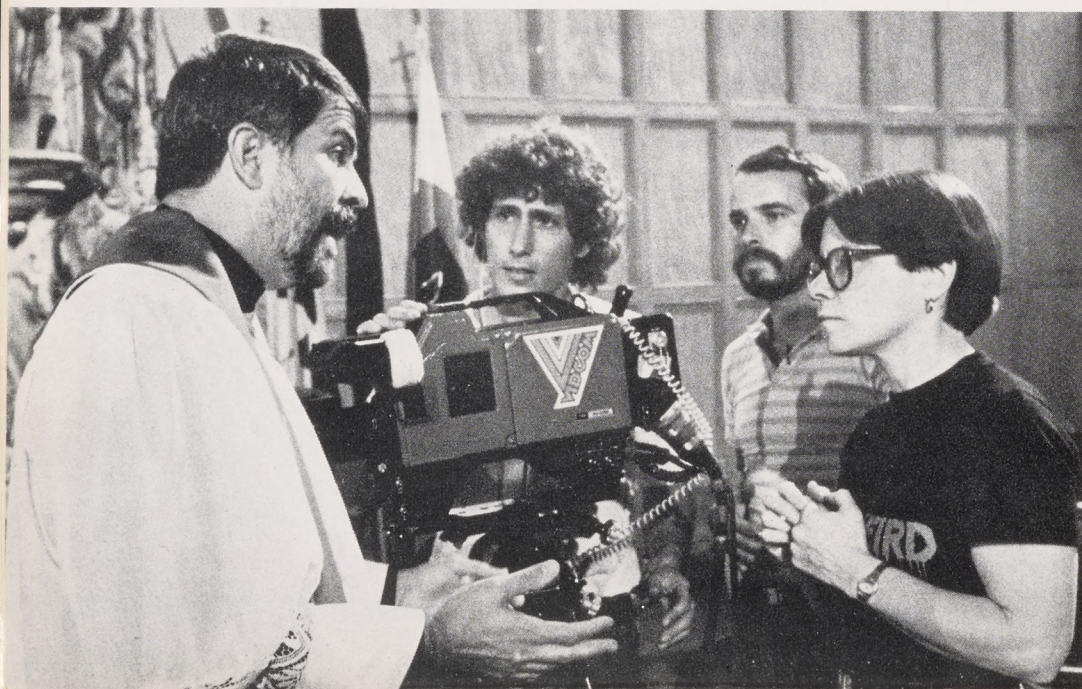
However, what makes this interesting is the fact that raka is the feminine form of the adjective used to describe the word "brother." We have no other Biblical example of this adjective used in the feminine form to describe a masculine noun. This in essence makes it have a very derogatory significance. In a patriarchal culture where the Hebrew man praised God every morning that he was created a man and not a woman, to have someone call him weak in a feminine sense was a great insult. About the closest we can come in the English idiom would be to call someone who valued his macho image a sissy.

This is further evidence that homophobia has its roots in sexism.

Now whether the Aramaic use of this term has the same homosexual undertones as the English epithet sissy does is unclear. However, the calling of such derogatory names is condemned by Jesus in Matthew 5:22.

If the connotations are the same in both English and Aramaic, we now have the only words recorded as spoken by Jesus on the subject of male homosexuality: anyone who ridicules us is condemned by Jesus' own words.

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continued on page 10



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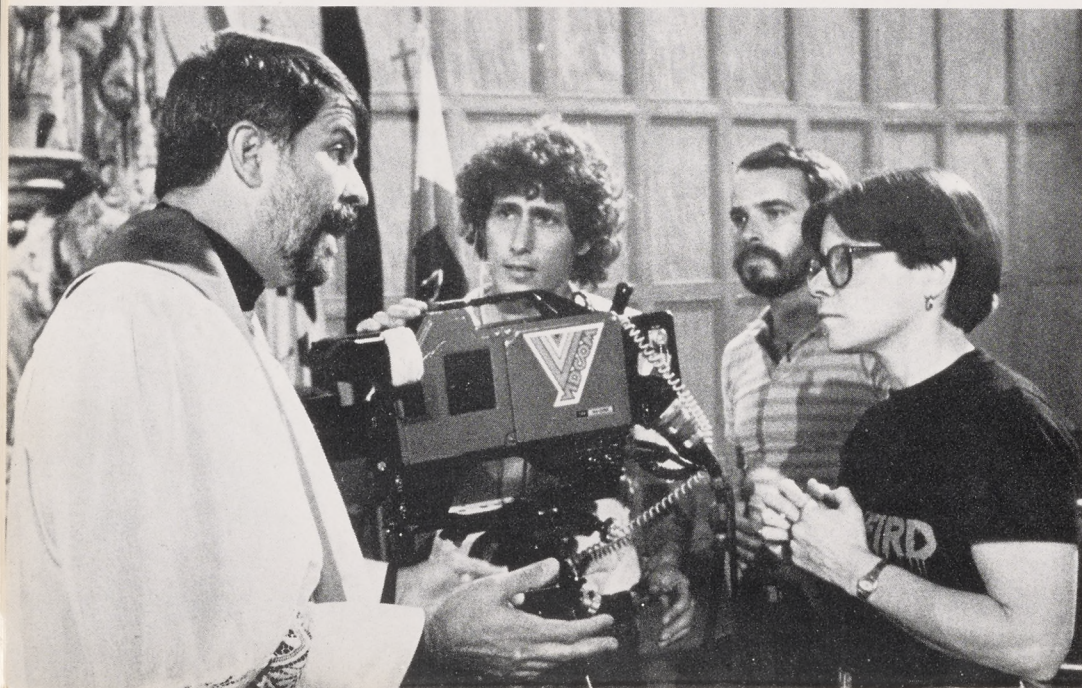
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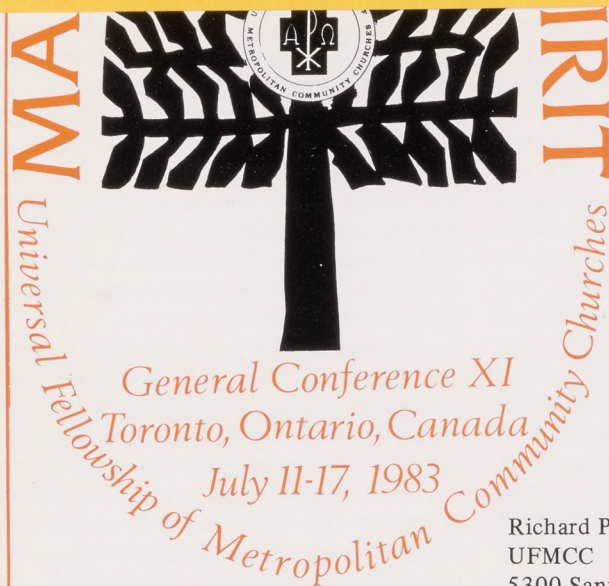
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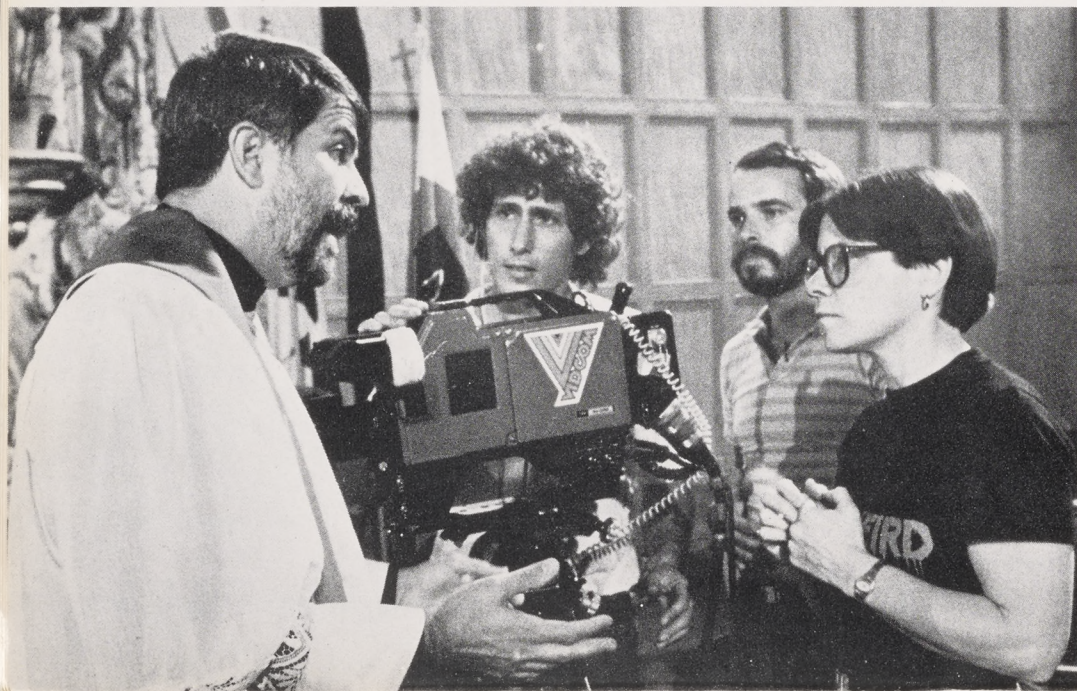
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NCC continued from page 7

them. But this is one divisive issue that won't be avoided.

The council's plenary debates may be dominated by ardent advocates and articulate opponents, but the deciding votes — and they will be No votes — will be cast by the political pragmatists of the middle who would not be opposed to having the UFMCC in membership, but who firmly believe it would be irresponsible to admit the controversial denomination at the risk of severely weakening an ecumenical body that is engaged in so many indispensable ministries that might not get done if the NCC didn't do them.

But in what looks to be a no-win situation, it's possible that the council can sound a note of grace even while saying No to the Metropolitan Community Churches — if, instead of looking for an ecclesiological escape route, it is frank about the reasons for its decision. Instead of attributing the decision to the UFMCC's inadequacies to measure up to council standards, the council could show a touch

of class by speaking of the inadequacies of its own response: its own dividedness, the moral ambiguity of its action. It could say, in effect: This is who we are and where we are at this point in history. We are those people who choose to preserve one manifestation of Christian unity and, in doing so, close the door to another kind of Christian unity. We refuse membership to this Christian church because we fear to risk the council's own future.

An honest acknowledgment of the dilemma, coupled with a bold willingness to own up to the decision, could serve to keep open the channels of communication with the Metropolitan Community Churches, and in a later decade, when the questions of human sexuality that so perplex the church of our age may be seen in a different light, a different answer might be possible.

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Racism and MCC in South Africa

by Nancy Wilson
Clerk, Board of Elders

Today a Gay white man is desperately trying to get back into his own country. He was deported from South Africa for leading an integrated Gay and Lesbian Christian community.

It is a truism that religion most often functions in society as the reinforcer of social norms, even elevating them to universal or timeless truths. Religion then serves to stifle social protest, making it a "sin."

On the other hand, religion can and has been a powerful agent for social change and the struggle for justice and peace.

These two contradictions are very important in understanding the history of racism in Western culture. And it is very crucial for those of us who are in MCC.

I bring this up because of a true story happening at this moment to our brothers and sisters in South Africa reported to me by Rev. Elder Jean White.

The government of South Africa is one of the most notorious modern examples of white racism coming out of Western Colonialism. For years, Metropolitan Community Church has had contacts and underground communities in South Africa. Until this year (though we have had a denominational policy statement that is anti-apartheid) those contacts were largely with white people. Then, in 1982, a group of Gay and Lesbian Christians in Johannesburg asked to begin the process of formally affiliating with MCC. This group was different from others we had had contact with in that it not only had anti-racism and anti-apartheid as one of its main tenets, but, they were actually racially integrated and out of the closet.

Jean and I and the Board of Elders were thrilled at this news, and a little surprised that this group which challenged sexist, homophobic and racist ideology was permitted to exist at all. Almost simultaneously with their movement towards becoming an MCC affiliate, an article appeared in a South African Gay newspaper with a picture of this group of Black

and white Lesbian and Gay Christians. The result was that the leader (a white Gay man, whose name we cannot divulge) was given four days to leave the country.

Being deported meant he had to leave his lover of five years, his job, his money and all his possessions, and not be permitted to even apply to return for at least five years. He is now staying with people in MCC-London, England, who are helping him to find a way to get to Botswana so that he may see his lover and friends and take a few more things with him before he emigrates to England.

Our group in South Africa, we are told, is deeply shaken, but intends to go forward with their commitment to be who they are. That's all we know at the present time. And they are in a kind of constant danger that you and I know little of.

This little group is part of a large, growing resistance movement among Blacks and whites in South Africa that is politico-religious (South Africans do not so falsely separate their politics and religion!). "Everything is politics" is a South African expression.

Most of what we may have heard about religion in South Africa is of the "colonial" religions (white Dutch Reform or Anglican) that have been the justifiers of apartheid. But religion is so much more complicated than that in South Africa. Native African religion survives there, as does a unique blend of Christianity and African animism and ancestor worship in the African Independent Churches (the fastest growing religious movement in all of Africa). The South African Council of Churches has changed in 10 years from an all white organization to having seven Blacks and six whites on its Board. Even the Roman Catholic Church has taken bold steps to integrate its leadership and defy the government of South Africa.

Right wing Christian groups (financed by the government) tried to separate South African Churches from the World Council of Churches because of its support (financially and morally) for revolutionary

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CONGRESS FUNDS AIDS RESEARCH

In a Continuing Resolution passed during the lame duck session of Congress, \$2 million was appropriated for acquired immuno-deficiency syndrome (AIDS) to be conducted by the Center for Disease Control (CDC). This is a dramatic increase from the \$500,000 appropriation in 1982 and is also significant as one of only three new health related programs funded during the entire 97th Congress.

The work of the Gay Rights National Lobby (GRNL) to secure the support of key members of Congress was the major reason for the resolution's passage.

TV SPECIAL

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production costs for "God, Gays And The Gospel." God recently blessed me with some unexpected resources and I wanted my tithe on that abundance to go toward the potential healing, liberating work of this program. The reason I used the word "small" above is because I know that this amount is only the tip of the ice-berg and I wish I could do more.

I want to share with you where the abundance came from and you will see clearly how important it is for me to contribute to this work, and why I called it a 'healing, liberating work.' I received word of my father's death. When I went down to the funeral, I stayed in my father's apartment and started to go through some of his things. What I discovered horrified me. He was a child molester--little boys. I firmly feel that his perversity would not have occurred if he had grown up and lived in a loving and free environment toward Gay and Lesbian people. If only he had known when he was young that God loved him just the way he was, that in fact, God created him that way, maybe all the children he molested wouldn't have had to endure his obsession.

I believe in the power of God's healing and message of liberation and Grace that the proposed program can bring to millions of people, and if and when it does air, I pray that the 'good news' proclaimed will turn another away from perverse outlets to a healthy and whole acceptance of their possible Gay nature. My prayers are with you also, because you are so instrumental in declaring God's acceptance of us all. Thank you for all of your personal work and prayers in ministering to our healing community. May God bless you abundantly in the New Year, as well as those to whom you minister."

fellowship news

our journey

JOY MCC EXPERIENCES BUSY, SUCCESSFUL YEAR

Joy MCC in Orlando, Florida is a place where they sometimes get tired but never get bored. Starting in July this church raised, in one worship service, cash and pledges to pull them out of a debt of \$2,500.

As summer went on attendance records were broken almost every other Sunday and then in August they moved to new, rented facilities so there would be adequate space to hold them and their programs. The end of September brought a church retreat attended by over 70 people. It was a Spirit filled day with immersion baptisms and lots of testimony from people whose lives had changed because of MCC.

Typical of many people who have been touched by MCC's ministry, when these people had an opportunity to share with the world, the good news they had found, they raised \$1,600 in one weekend so "God, Gays and the Gospel" could become a reality. This was unselfish, free will giving which poured forth as readily as the Spirit did. Fifteen people made trips to Tampa and then St. Petersburg first to hear Rev. Troy Perry and then for District Conference.

Their lives were again touched and they were a positive witness to other sisters and brothers.

On November 15 their pastor, Rev. Nancy Radclyffe, was selected as "Outstanding Woman of 1982" by Gay Community Services of Orlando. The congregation was doubly proud since she had only served in Orlando since mid-July of 1982.

December brought an ever increasing involvement of the laity in the ministry of Joy MCC as they prepared for a Christmas Eve Open House and Candlelight Service. MCC shared these occasions with a newly forming chapter of Dignity with both Father Marty and Rev. Nancy celebrating the Catholic and the MCC Eucharists. Once again the Spirit of God was very much in

evidence as over 100 people, including MCC's landowner and his wife, shared together in celebrating the birth of Jesus and the coming again of Christ.

The Year has ended with a trip to Disney World's Magic Kingdom for the Children's Sunday School. Four children, the Pastor and her spouse and a parent enjoyed this day as a present to the children from the church. Two of the older children will be taken on a later excursion to Disney's newest Florida attraction, EPCOT.

1983 is beginning with plans and activity for their Chartering Service on March 13th. The Rev. Elder Troy Perry and his spouse Greg are being flown in for the celebration and to have Troy present the charter. The serious moments of this long awaited occasion will be well interspersed with fun activities.

MCC GALVESTON FINDS NEW HOME

Metropolitan Community Church of Galveston has purchased its own building, located at 1824 Broadway in the famed East Side Historical District. The 2200 sq. ft. building, initially constructed as a residence in the early '20s, offers ample space for worship facilities, offices, conference center and various social activities.

MCCG intends to utilize the facility as a community center for the island's Gay men and Lesbians. In 1983, they hope to house a Gay/Lesbian Alcoholics Anonymous group, legal and medical referral service, counseling programs and an arts and crafts center, in addition to a full range of religious activities and Christian education programs.

The dedication service for the building was held Sunday, January 9 and coincided with the third anniversary of the church's founding.

Send *your* church news to *JOURNEY* the first week of the month to appear in the next issue. Send photos, too.

BALTIMORE ARCHBISHOP CONVERTED

The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Baltimore, Maryland celebrated a special Mass with members of Dignity there, only two years after he was denounced by community activists for helping to defeat a gay rights bill before the city council.

Archbishop Border's face was described as "almost strained" as he told the over 200 congregants, "You, as members of Dignity, must always appreciate the reality that you are members of the total community of God's people on a pilgrimage through time. We obtain happiness and fulfillment in time and eternity only when we bring others with us." He spoke of his conviction "that the local church of Baltimore had an obligation to respond to your particular hopes and needs."

Ginny Apuzzo, Executive Director of the National Gay Task Force (NGTF) and a former nun, said at a reception following the Mass, "It is an awesome thing to be a teacher. It is a moment of grace to be a teacher. You have taught this city and this archbishop something, very, very important."

RACISM AND MCC IN SOUTH AFRICA

continued from page 10

African movements. But they are *not* winning that fight. The World Alliance of Reformed Churches last year expelled the two white Dutch Reformed Churches for their unrelenting racist policies. There has been endless persecution and harassment of Black church leaders and white anti-racists.

But it is the persecution of church leaders that has brought this so strongly to the attention of the world church community. And, it just may be this that makes time run out at long last for the racist politico-religious establishment of South Africa. Political analysts have long underestimated the power of religion as an agent for social change and that may prove dramatically so in South Africa.

Our sisters and brothers in South Africa are trying to live in a *new* way - a Gay and Lesbian Christian way, in alignment with the love of God in Jesus Christ and with other bold, anti-racist, Black and white South African Christians. They need our prayers, love and support. For more information or to send letters of love and care to them write to: Rev. Elder Jean White, 31 Fairmount Road, Brixton SW2 2BJ, England.



UFMCC's Commission on Faith, Fellowship and Order

by Jennie Boyd Bull
Chair, FFO

Many districts paid for the representatives' travel to the Faith, Fellowship and Order meeting held in San Francisco, California, and there was throughout the meeting a spirit of enthusiasm and commitment to our task together. It was exciting to see our diversity bear fruit in the Holy Spirit—in common vision and enriched understanding of our varying perspectives. And we had fun—two teddy bears attended the entire meeting; we shared food together, sang together and worshipped together.

The Commission focused on organizing and presenting data from the two FFO workshops being offered throughout UFMCC, Basics of the Christian Faith I and II: Integrating our Spirituality and Our Sexuality and Our Statement of Faith. All but two districts have already offered or have definite plans to offer both workshops, and there has been enthusiastic response from some world church extension areas. (Persons interested in receiving one credit for attending the workshops and writing a followup paper should contact Samaritan Extended Studies, 11 Columbia Street, Hartford, Connecticut 06106.)

The Commission agreed that its primary task at this point is collecting and dispersing information, and has agreed to offer a series of articles from individual FFO representatives in upcoming issues of *JOURNEY*, between now and General Conference. These articles are the individual statements of their authors, and reflect the diversity and richness of the thought and experience our Fellowship offers on matters of deep pastoral and

theological concern to us all.

One of FFO's major products from the meeting was the first draft of study questions toward a Christian theology of sexuality. These are to be refined and ordered during the coming months, for final presentation at General Conference, looking toward intensive study of these questions in the coming two years. Two "purpose questions" arose from the meeting, to guide all of our seeking on this subject:

1. How does a theology of sexuality enable us to reach people with the saving knowledge of Christ?
2. How does Christ in Resurrection

liberate us from sexual oppressions in our expressions, relationships and civil liberties?

The Commission also made plans for General Conference, including a commission fair display and presentation, worship, offering workshops I and II plus an additional workshop on the study questions, data and conclusions from workshops already offered, and plans for the coming two years. No changes to the Statement of Faith will be proposed by FFO at General Conference.

FFO "embodied" its purpose in a closing worship service. We celebrated communion together and joined in a Rite

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Genital Spirituality

by Clarence Crossman
Layperson, FFO
Eastern Canada

Genital spirituality!? The phrase strikes me funny, even as I write and think about it. And yet it should make perfect sense, if we believe that the mission of UFMCC, and our maturing as Christians, includes reclaiming or discovering the spiritual dimensions of sexuality and the sexual dimensions of spirituality.

Perhaps you may not wish to go so far as to say that your sexuality and spirituality are part of each other - aspects of yourself that need to be integrated or fit together to make you whole and holy, yes - but not the same thing. I think we often picture spirituality and sexuality to be equal and distinct (if not opposite) forces in our lives, sort of like our church lives and our sex

lives. If that is the case, talking about expressing your spirituality with your genitals will not make sense, even if you believe your sexual activities to be God-pleasing. But I perceive such an image of the relationship between sexuality and spirituality to be dangerously distorted.

One working definition of spirituality describes it as relationship with God. That phrase sounds right, but we need to be constantly reminded that everything we are and do is important to God and everything we are and do is expression of our relationship with God (or worship of God). Nothing about us escapes being wrapped up in our relationship with God. We often think or act as if only explicitly religious aspects of our lives are spiritual. If we believe spirituality to be the same thing as religiousness, it remains one category about ourselves on

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SPIRITUALITY continued from page 12
 equal footing with several others, exerting good and important influences on them through interaction. But spirituality cannot be integrated or fit together with other aspects of ourselves in the manner of a puzzle, spirituality is the very process of integration. It is the process of becoming whole, holy, perfect: God's deepest yearning and delight for us. It is an all-encompassing vocation - it is all of life and not one element in life.

So the way that sexuality is part of spirituality is different from the way that spirituality is part of sexuality. By encompassing all of human life, spirituality includes sexuality within itself. Sexuality can be a powerful factor (though only one factor) of spirituality as vocation, as life. Sexual and genital activity that is integrative, healing and God-delighting is spiritual. The dictionary definition of spiritual as incorporeal or immaterial has its roots in lousy theology. Spirituality can be embodied; spirituality can be sexual. Unfortunately that lousy theology has a long history and is extremely influential. It is a large element in the heritage that makes sex so feared and hated in North America and elsewhere. It is the basis for the uncomfortable snickers with which I often accompany my sincere declaration that I can worship God and express my spirituality with my genitals.

Considering what a powerful force sex is within our lives, and a potentially powerful force within spirituality, that declaration would be a joyous and matter-of-fact one. Yet, I know I am not alone in my lack of integration and wholeness - in spite of the fact that people readily demonstrate, from their own experience, the commonality between sexuality and spirituality.

In various seminars, I have asked people to briefly describe how they know, from their personal experience, that sexuality is a good gift from God. (I encourage you now to briefly make a list). Lists have been made which, in part, describe sexuality as a means to intimacy, self-worth, liberation, growth and maturation, deep emotions, self-transcendence, self-giving, self-awareness, sensitivity, wholeness, and after some encouragement, people have admitted to having fun.

I have then asked them to briefly describe how they know, from their own experience, that spirituality is a good gift from God. (I encourage you to briefly make a second list). Lists have been made which, in part, describe spirituality as a means to growth and maturation, self-

transcendence, deep emotions, self-giving, intimacy, wholeness, sensitivity, self-awareness, self-worth, freedom.

No one has yet described spirituality as fun, but it has been described as celebration. On putting the two lists side by side we have discovered them to be, at times, almost identical and always interchangeable: there has never been a description in one list that was inappropriate for the other.

So why do we instinctively drive a wedge between sexuality and spirituality when our own experiences tell us they are the same thing? I am convinced that any description that could be added to the two lists will always come under one of three categories: COMMUNION, CREATIVITY, CELEBRATION. They summarize the positive content, the God-giveness, of both spirituality and sexuality (but that topic is another whole essay). I believe our experiences also verify the fact that when the two are separated, spirituality is truncated and handicapped and sexuality is abusive and dirty.

We desperately need liberation from whatever keeps them alienated in our lives. The bondage and harm that result from such tragic separation is expressed in something as minor as sheepishness (for example, about admitting that profound love-making often follows profound worship services) through to murder and suicide. The more I think about the potential of, and the alternatives to, genital spirituality the more it makes perfect sense.

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FFO representatives will be writing articles regarding a Christian Theology of Sexuality to be published in *JOURNEY*. These articles are the opinion of the individual author and do not represent the opinion of FFO.

Some upcoming articles are: "Healing Sexual Wounds" by Rev. Roger Webb; "The Risen Christ and Sexual Liberation" by Rev. Marianne Van Fossen; "Evangelism and Sexuality" by Rev. Jo Crisco; "Eucharist and Embodiment" by Rev. Jennie Boyd Bull and "Sexual Holiness" by Sally Sumerall.

FFO MEETS IN SAN FRANCISCO *continued from page 12*

of Blessing for the relationship of Betty Pedersen and Michelle Carmody, Northwest and Western Canada representatives to FFO. We were all blessed at such a joyous confirmation of our task.

The following representatives were present: Jennie Boyd Bull, chair; Jeri Ann Harvey, liaison elder; Marianne Van Fossen, MidAtlantic; Clarence Crossman, Eastern Canada; Victoria Landes, South Atlantic; Joseph Gilbert and Tad Lincoln, Southeast; Carol Ann Kyrias, Great Lakes; Candace Adams and B.J. Couvion, MidCentral; Jo Crisco and Sally Sumerall, South Central; Ernie LaCasse and Michelle Carmody, Western Canada; Betty Pedersen and Jack Hubbs, Northwest; Roger Webb and Chuck Russell, Southwest; Lucia Chappelle and Sherre Boothman, Samaritan advisors.

GRNL CREATES NEW REGION; REPLACES WEST COAST DIRECTOR

The Gay Rights National Lobby (GRNL) has announced that it will be opening a regional office to coordinate its field operations in 12 Midwestern states: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin. The new office, tentatively scheduled to open in the spring of 1983, will most likely be located in Chicago.

Land of sunshine land of promise!?

by Nancy Radclyffe
Pastor, Joy MCC

Rev. Nancy Radclyffe, Pastor of Joy MCC in Orlando, Florida, is creator of a new pilot program of Chaplaincy in the Fellowship which involves pastoral care for pastors, worship coordinators, lay leaders and significant others. This program has been endorsed by the Board of Elders and the CCCC. This is a pastoral care article.

In recent years the population of the United States has been migrating south with the promise of warm weather, lower unemployment figures and southern hospitality. The purpose of this article is to share the realities of "moving south." I speak from the perspective of my experience in Florida, however, most of this is equally applicable to the other warm states.

Yes, we do have a lower unemployment rate than many of the northern states but it is still a high unemployment rate. Many people are out of work and even long term residents may spend months finding a new job once they are laid off. Many jobs, even at Disney, are only at minimum wage regardless of prior experience. Employers will be hesitant to employ someone who has just moved here, especially in the winter, for fear that they are "snow birds" who will return north in the spring. People with college educations and professional work experience often find that they must take a minimum wage job in order to survive while looking and waiting for the right job.

Apartment complexes require a deposit of at least one month's rent and sometimes two months. They check your references to see if you are employed and earn enough to pay the rent. Utilities are usually a separate fee and require deposits such as \$100 to have the electricity turned on. There is some shortage of housing and few "cheap" rooming houses. Most of the apartments do not take pets. There are very few efficiency or studio apartments.

Except perhaps for California, when you move south you are moving to a more conservative part of the country where there are few or no "gay rights." In many of these states, including Florida, it is against the law for two "unrelated adults

of the same sex" to rent a one bedroom apartment. Right up front then is the expense of a two bedroom apartment.

Do not assume that there will be a gay organization where you are moving. If there is one or more do not assume that they have resources for housing referrals or roommate services. Such may simply not exist, may be diminished by the same hard times that are hitting you or people are naturally reluctant to take in strangers. While it may be rough where you are you do know people, you know your way around, and you know more about the available resources and are probably more eligible for them. There are thousands of gay and non-gay people living on the streets even in the "land of sunshine." Many are there because they decided to move south without making adequate plans well in advance.

If I have not yet discouraged you from moving, then here are some suggestions that may help to make your move more successful. Start planning at least six months ahead. Save up your money for the move. You will need food, lodging and gas while looking for work. The lodging will probably be the expensive variety of hotels or motels. Figure a minimum of a thousand dollars a month for at least 3 to 6 months for living expenses. Local public transportation will probably be inadequate and a car will be needed.

Write ahead to the local Chamber of Commerce telling of your pending move and requesting relevant information on jobs, housing, food costs, etc. Check a gay guide and see if there are any gay organizations. Write them and see what services they have to offer and if they have any job and housing suggestions. Contact the local newspaper and request a couple of different copies of the Sunday paper. Read it; stories on crime, unemployment, the business section and of course the want ads for jobs and housing costs. If you are in a kind of work that uses resumes, start sending them out well in advance. Write companies in your line of work and inquire about job opportunities. Plan a trip down for job interviews and to see the area before you actually move.

At the present time I receive an average of two calls a week from people

who have moved down here without adequate planning and financial resources. They are down to their last 10 dollars and have no place to stay, nothing to eat. Even the Salvation Army and the Union Rescue Mission have 3-day limits on using their emergency housing. The most the average church or organization can do is perhaps a couple of meals because we do not have the resources for more. There are no magic wands to wave here in the sunshine, the realities are very similar to where you are.

Samaritan Extended Studies

by Bruce M. Kassalow
Staff, SEC

Samaritan Education Center is looking forward to a most ambitious 1983. The Correspondence Course Catalogue is currently under expansion. Education by mail is SEC's present method of gathering world wide UFMCC participation. The school desires to have students from every single church in the entire Fellowship.

The Samaritan Division of The Universal Fellowship Press has had a great success with its first publication *HOMO-SEXUALITY AND THE CONSERVATIVE CHRISTIAN* by the Rev. L. Robert Arthur. The Rev. Freda Smith's *DEAR DORA DANGEROUS DEREK DIESEL DYKE* is now available. *THE UFMCC COOKBOOK* is under preparation and should be available by early spring.

SEC's Second Semester classes from the Resident College began on February 1, 1983. Courses being offered include Catalysts In UFMCC Theology: The History Of Feminist Critique instructed by the Rev. Lucia Chappelle, Sermon Preparation And Delivery instructed by the Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson, and The Role Of The Pastor instructed by the Rev. A. Stephen Pieters. Classes in Los Angeles will conclude with the Finals on May 28, 1983.

SEC wants to have a role in all of the lives of all members of UFMCC. The address for further information is 5300 Santa Monica Blvd., No. 104, Los Angeles, California 90029.

GENERAL CONFERENCE Sneak Preview!

schedule, significant programming for non-delegates and attention given to pastoral counselling needs.

WORSHIP: Worship is always the most important thing we do when we gather together. General Conference XI will be no exception. Our worship services will be held in a separate building from business meetings and we will have two major worship services a day. The morning worship (yet to be designed) will be from 8-9, except for the opening service which will be longer.

Evening service will be at 7:30 and will be more open-ended as to time frame. This way, we can begin business every morning promptly at 9:30 instead of at 11:00 or so as in the past. Our hope is that if business progresses by Wednesday afternoon we will be able to have some honest-to-goodness free time.

The Board of Elders will be choosing the preachers in February. Rev. Renee McCoy, pastor of Harlem MCC, will be organizing worship for the Conference. Mr. Danny Ray of Dallas, TX will be coordinating music (special music and congregational singing). Worship will be exciting, filling, reverent and reflective of the diversity of worship styles in MCC. Also, Rev. Bjorn Marcussen of Copenhagen has offered to lead some times of quiet meditation and reflection. Tuesday's worship service will focus on and celebrate Third World outreach, as resolved by General Conference X. We will have a special worship celebration of commitment to the next biennium of the UFMCC at our Friday night service; a Saturday night Ordination service and, of course, the Sunday morning large worship service featuring Rev. Perry as the preacher.

BUSINESS: This year we will continue to use the "forum" concept for the Elders Report, the reports from the Commission on GSS and other important upcoming issues. In addition, at the request of the Commission on the Laity, we will have a Monday A.M. "preliminaries" time for all lay delegates, for the Elders Nominating Committee, for the Finance Committee (which will have hearings all week—not conflicting with business sessions) and for clergy delegates. We are also planning extra day hours for business if needed so that we do not have to be having business meetings at 11 PM

Saturday evening . . .

SPECIAL SPEAKERS: A brochure is being produced by the Fellowship with more details on this important aspect of Conference. Our major outside speaker is Dr. Virginia Mollenkott, author of *Is The Homosexual My Neighbor?* and *Women, Men And The Bible*, among other titles. She will be addressing the General Conference and will lead a four hour seminar.

We are experimenting this year with not having dozens of short, poorly attended, "squeezed in between business" workshops, but with presenting four major seminars simultaneously, on Thursday with no conflicting business. That way we felt people could go away from Conference with a substantial educational experience.

The seminars include "Church Growth" by Rev. Don Eastman; a seminar on the laity and building community by Ms. Jean Gralley (former chair of the Commission on the Laity, artist and author); and a seminar on "Spirituality and Sexuality" by Reverends F. Jay Deacon and Jennie Boyd Bull.

SPECIAL EVENTS: There will be time and space for special needs and concerns (Women sharing, alternative ministries, substance abuse prevention, caucus meetings, etc.) A chapel will be open at all times, and information centers and hospitality rooms will also be staffed. There will be pastoral care for those in need of counselling.

The Human Rights Rally and Celebration, a regular feature of past General Conferences, will occur Saturday afternoon and will include presentation of awards and entertainment - music and comedy, UFMCC fashion - don't miss it!

FOR NON-DELEGATES: For the first time, the General Conference Management Team has given special thought and planning to the needs of those who are not lay or clergy delegates to Conference. The host church, MCC-Toronto, is making plans of their own for tours and round-the-clock hospitality. In addition there will be a seminar on "UFMCC Today and General Conference Orientation"; the two FFO workshops given around the Fellowship will be offered as well as a new, third workshop, Excel (Exercise in Christian Community Living - a lay renewal movement in MCC, under the direction of Samaritan Educational Center, adapted from the Catholic Cursillo movement) will make a presentation; there will be an afternoon discussion on "Homosexuality

and the Bible, a time of sharing for women and a time for men; a time of sharing for Third World people; and a time of exploring the internationality of MCC and to share what it is like to be "MCC" in different cultures and countries. Also, MCC-Toronto plans to offer an ad hoc sharing group for lay people who edit newsletters, are Church secretaries/administrators, who are treasurers, etc.

BUDGET PROCESS: For the first time in the history of UFMCC, we have a budget process that maximizes input and involves every district in decision making. All Committees, Commissions, Departments and Boards have already been asked for input to the Finance Committee (Chair, Rev. Reid Christensen of MCC Illiamo). The Finance Committee will propose a first draft of the budget, will distribute it with pre-Conference reports and will hold hearings for the first three days of Conference to make adjustments.

They will then present the final draft to the General Conference for action and adoption. This will allow for more input than ever before in the budget process, and will eliminate the last minute frustrating "budget changes by resolution" that happened last Conference because that was the only avenue available for budget input and change.

PRE-CONFERENCE MEETING:

General Conference officially begins Monday, July 11. However, the Board of Elders will meet the week prior, as well as the CCCC, Faith, Fellowship & Order, GSS, the Hispanic Americas District, and the Third World Outreach group formed from the Third World Gay and Lesbian Christian Conference held last October. That list is not exhaustive. So, really, it will be a busy two weeks for many of us!

The General Conference Management Team, Mr. Richard Ploen, Mr. Phil Gallnitz, Elder Michael Mank and myself hope that this "sneak preview" really excites you about General Conference XI.

The Research and Development Council, an advisory group to the Board of Elders, is researching and preparing plans for a Board of Pensions for UFMCC.

This long overdue project will be for clergy, lay leaders and Fellowship employees.

The details of this proposal will be included in the pre-conference packet.

See you in Toronto!

